

About Assemblymember Koretz

BIOGRAPHY

Assemblyman Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood) was elected to represent the 42nd Assembly District on November 7, 2000, and was re-elected in 2002. The 42nd Assembly District includes West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Hollywood, Hancock Park, Los Feliz, Westwood, Brentwood, Universal City, Studio City, Encino, Sherman Oaks, North Hollywood and Valley Village. Paul has served as the Chair of the Assembly Labor Committee since his freshman year, one of only a handful of legislators to chair a standing policy committee as a freshman. Paul also chairs the Assembly Select Committee on Gun Violence and the Assembly Select Committee on California's Nursing Shortage. He serves as a member of the Health, Public Safety, Business & Professions, Insurance and Natural Resources committees.

Paul has already received a number of honors during his short tenure in the Assembly. A longtime champion of people living with AIDS and HIV, Paul has been given the prestigious Leadership Award by the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, and has been honored as a champion of AIDS research and service in the state by the University AIDS Research Program. For his dedication to enacting sensible gun legislation, Paul was given the Courageous Leadership Award by Women Against Gun Violence, and was honored by the Million Mom March for his vigorous and unrelenting leadership in the fight to prevent gun violence. He was named Environmentalist of the Year by the Hollywood Beautification Team, and was a member of the California League of Conservation Voters' "Freshman 100" for his 100% voting record in support of the environment. In addition, Paul has been named Freshman Legislator of the Year by the California Psychiatric Association, has received the Fighter Award from the Service Employees International Union, Local 434, and has been recognized for his outstanding public service by the California School Employees Association.

Paul was exposed to politics and social causes at a very young age, having accompanied his father to a 1960 rally for John F. Kennedy, and also joining his father on picket lines for the hotel and restaurant workers union. Paul's early political career began while he was a student at UCLA in the 1970s, when he ran for a seat on the Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education. Paul served as an aide to then-Los Angeles City Councilman Zev Yaroslavsky in 1975, and then to then-L.A. City Councilman Marvin Braude in 1984.

Late in 1984, Paul had the unique opportunity to help build the new City of West Hollywood. He worked for the City's incorporation while managing the City Council campaign of Alan Viterbi and served as Mr. Viterbi's Council Deputy after his election. Upon Councilman Viterbi's retirement in 1988, Paul was elected to the West Hollywood City Council. He proudly served as Mayor and City Councilman for 12 years before being elected to the State Assembly.

While on the City Council, Koretz played a key role on many high profile issues, foremost among them gun control issues. In 1988, Paul sponsored a ban on military-style assault weapons, which built momentum for a subsequent statewide ban. In 1996, Koretz co-sponsored the City's ban on "Saturday Night Specials." West Hollywood was the first city to enact such a ban, which survived various legal assaults by the NRA. Koretz also sponsored an ordinance limiting handgun purchases to one gun per month, to cut the resale of guns on the black market.

Assemblyman Koretz has also devoted much of his time to anti-tobacco advocacy. He introduced legislation in the State Assembly to increase the smoking age to 21 in order to make it harder for young people to gain access to tobacco products and prevent people from becoming addicted to tobacco. As a City Councilman, Paul authored West Hollywood's ordinance banning smoking in restaurants, and developed the strategy of making it a regional ban by having neighboring cities pass the same ban at the same time. This provided momentum to help pass Assemblyman Terry Friedman's AB 13.

In addition, Koretz has been an environmental leader and activist for many years. He was the first Southern California Director of the California League of Conservation Voters and served as Administrative Director of the Ecology Center of Southern California. In the Assembly, he has introduced legislation requiring retailers profiting from the most commonly littered items to share some of the costs of removing trash from storm water runoff, and he is the joint-author of legislation to ban the use of PERC by dry cleaners. PERC is a solution used to dry clean garments which has been found to be carcinogenic.

Koretz has also been a guardian of Los Angeles County's health system, an unwavering champion of the gay and lesbian community and a well-known opponent of animal cruelty. Crime prevention is also one of Koretz's top priorities. He is also a passionate advocate for the Jewish community.

The Koretz family history in West Hollywood dates back more than 50 years. Koretz's father escaped Nazi Germany's persecution of Jews in 1939 by emigrating to America. Koretz grew up in West Hollywood and was educated at local schools, graduating from Hamilton High School. He earned a bachelor's degree in history from UCLA in 1979, where he was a founder of the "Bruin Democrats". A lifelong democrat, Koretz served on the Los Angeles County Democratic Committee for more than 10 years. Koretz also owned his own business, which for several years was one of the largest sellers of American historical and political memorabilia in the country. Koretz's wife Gail serves as Director of Public Affairs for Kaiser Permanente Los Angeles Medical Center. They have one daughter, Rachel.